

**Idaho Operations Office  
2016 Safety Culture Sustainment Plan**

**May 2016**



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### **BACKGROUND/PURPOSE**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Idaho Operations Office (DOE-ID) is committed to establishing and maintaining a strong and sustained nuclear safety culture. A positive safety culture is an integral aspect of an effective ISM system. DOE's commitment to a positive safety culture is expressed in DOE P 450.4A, *Integrated Safety Management Policy*:

*...the Department expects all organizations to embrace a strong safety culture where safe performance of work and involvement of workers in all aspects of work performance are core values of managers and workers. The Department encourages a questioning attitude by all employees and a work environment that fosters such attitude.*

In order to progress towards achieving this goal, DOE has been focused on establishing and strengthening a Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE) throughout the Department. In the recent past, the DOE has moved towards strengthening the overall safety culture within the Department. This focus has included independent reviews of DOE safety culture and SCWE, training, and operations office and contractor safety culture self-assessments.

On June 27, 2014, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management (EM), EM-1, issued a directive for all field offices and contractors to develop Safety Culture Sustainment Plans (SCSP) to ensure strong and sustained safety cultures throughout EM. In an effort to ensure a sustained safety culture at DOE-ID, this SCSP was developed to describe the tools DOE-ID has and will use to pursue continuous improvement and measure progress towards these improvements.

In early 2015, EM-HQ personnel conducted a review of all SCSPs within EM. Feedback on the 2014 DOE-ID SCSP was reviewed and incorporated into this SCSP. Of note, safety culture metrics continue to be an ongoing focus for the office and Department. The DOE Safety Culture Improvement Panel is at work developing proposed metrics. DOE-ID will consider these metrics for implementation, once developed. Until then, DOE-ID will rely on existing metrics and survey/interview tools to "measure" the organization's safety culture health.

### **OVERVIEW**

Over the past several years, DOE-ID has been working to improve the safety culture and SCWE within the operations office. These efforts have included independent safety culture reviews, improvement plans, self-assessments, training, action plans, and continuous reinforcement of management expectations for a strong safety culture. The following paragraphs describe the independent and self-assessments conducted in these areas over the past several years.

**Independent Assessment of Safety Culture:** In April/May 2012, the DOE Office of Health, Safety, and Security (HSS) conducted an independent assessment of the safety culture at the Integrated Waste Treatment Unit (IWTU), a new DOE EM nuclear facility being built and commissioned at the DOE Idaho Site. This HSS review included an evaluation of the safety culture of the DOE-ID operations office. As a result of this review, DOE-ID developed and implemented a Safety Culture Improvement Plan to address vulnerabilities associated with the operations office safety culture. All actions from this Improvement Plan have been completed.

**SCWE Self-Assessment:** In July/August, 2013, a DOE-ID team conducted a self-assessment of DOE-ID's SCWE using some guidance from DOE-HQ, but primarily using a safety culture self-assessment model used in the commercial nuclear industry. This SCWE self-assessment was very effective in evaluating the DOE-ID SCWE and in evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken following the 2012 safety culture review conducted by HSS. This SCWE self-assessment determined:

“... the focus areas and attributes of DOE-ID's Safety Conscious Work Environment (SCWE) were implemented and effective, overall, based on the results from the survey, interviews, and observed activities.”

This self-assessment identified nine potential vulnerabilities and provided five recommendations for continued improvement. An Action Plan was developed by a multi-disciplined team within DOE-ID to address the Recommendations from the self-assessment. This action plan has been implemented and work is ongoing in this area. Key actions from this plan were outlined in the 2014 version of this sustainment plan.

**Safety Culture Self-Assessment:** In August/September, 2015, a DOE-ID team (with some external support) conducted a self-assessment of DOE-ID's safety culture using guidance contained in “Safety Conscious Work Environment Self-Assessment Guidance,” Revision G, but primarily using a safety culture self-assessment model used in the commercial nuclear industry. This safety culture self-assessment was very effective in evaluating the DOE-ID safety culture and in evaluating the effectiveness of the actions taken following the 2013 SCWE self-assessment. This safety culture self-assessment determined:

Overall, the review team determined the focus areas and attributes of DOE-ID's Safety Culture are effectively demonstrated based on the results from the survey, interviews, and observed activities. Opportunities for improvement were identified, but it is evident from the employees, based on overall more positive survey results and interview responses compared to those in 2013, that DOE-ID has made improvements to the Federal Office's safety culture over the past two years.

The assessment team identified nine Strengths, six Opportunities for Improvement (OFI), and provided three Recommendations for focused management attention and improvement. The Recommendations provided by the team centered on the following elements: fostering improved teamwork and trust across organizations, increasing office understanding of Safety Culture and how it relates to their specific work environment, and improving the effectiveness of Management Engagement in the field. The DOE-ID Manager chartered three, multi-disciplined improvement initiative teams within the office to review the Recommendations from the self-assessment and

develop initiatives for continuous improvement in the recommended areas. These three teams evaluated the 2015 Safety Culture Self-Assessment (SCSA) report and developed recommended improvement initiatives to address the SCSA Recommendations. The teams presented their recommendations to DOE-ID senior leadership. The recommendations were subsequently evaluated by the Safety Culture Advisor, refined, and presented to the DOE-ID senior leadership team for review, comment, and eventual approval via this SCSP.

## **SUSTAINMENT PLAN**

The DOE-ID operations office is committed to ensuring a strong safety culture (and SCWE). To accomplish this goal, a number of tools, including activities and ongoing actions, will be used to sustain and improve upon the DOE-ID safety culture. The following key actions and activities are planned/in progress based on the most recent SCSA. These actions and activities have been binned in the Safety Culture Focus Areas defined in Attachment 10 of DOE G 450.4-1C, *Integrated Safety Management System Guide*.

### **Leadership**

Ongoing DOE-ID management support of SCWE and safety culture improvement efforts has been evident in the number and quality of self-assessments conducted to date, development of safety culture-like performance indicators, where possible, and for employee engagement in development of continuous improvement initiatives. For clarity, the employee-based teams developing improvement initiatives from the 2015 Safety Culture Self-Assessment recommended providing safety culture fundamentals training to the DOE-ID staff who had not yet received such training. Between the time of this recommended initiative and development of this sustainment plan, the training was completed. In fact, greater than 96% of the DOE-ID staff has been trained in safety culture awareness. As a result of the 2015 DOE-ID Safety Culture Self-Assessment, the following improvement initiatives will be implemented within the Leadership focus area:

- Expand the use of information sharing meetings by senior leaders with staff (similar to those held by the Deputy Manager, Idaho Cleanup Project with his staff); DOE-ID senior leaders should consider attending one of the EM All-Hands meetings as a benchmark.
- The Federal Employee Occupational Safety and Health (FEOSH) committee will hold open house/traveling road show meetings to reinforce mechanisms and forums available to report concerns, opportunities for improvement, and workplace enhancement
- SLT and Office Manager, as a part of their daily meetings, request to specifically hear about a management field visit and an employee engagement experiences

## **Employee/Worker Engagement**

The 2015 DOE-ID Safety Culture Self-Assessment report identified a number of ways to improve worker engagement through enhancements in teamwork. Although these also foster open communications in the Leadership focus area, they are primarily aimed at improving teamwork and mutual respect. One item recommended by the improvement teamsThe improvement initiatives in this area are:

- Improve teamwork, internal communication and cross organizational communication through enhancement of Integrated Project Team (IPT) and Operations Activity Team (OAT) meetings; obtain cross organizational attendance of DOE-ID Office IPT/OAT's by team leads to foster improvement in teamwork and communications across the office
- Increase the workforces' knowledge and awareness of existing and new personnel by featuring each division in the 10 O'Clock News and on the front of the DOE-ID intranet home page for a period of time
- Create an online bulletin board with office needs for short term assignments; this bulletin may also contain a question and answer (Q&A) type forum to foster improved communications within the office

## **Organizational Learning**

In order to evaluate the effect of the improvements identified in this sustainment plan, based on the recommendations from the 2015 Safety Culture Self-Assessment, the employee-based improvement teams recommended the following:

- DOE-ID will develop an "Above and Beyond Safety" type program, where DOE leadership (supervisor and above) will actively reward staff for acts or development of plans that promote safety culture improvements
- FEOSH committee will develop 5-7 minute videos for the internal web site targeted at raising safety awareness and safety culture by providing a safety culture attribute reminder relevant in AND outside of the workplace
- Provide initial and continuing training for management and supervisors to improve effectiveness of quality management engagement with the workforce to include:
  - 1) What is considered effective management engagement with the workforce,
  - 2) Senior management expectations for routine, quality engagement, and
  - 3) Methods for coaching, mentoring, reinforcing positive behaviors, etc.
- DOE-ID Safety Culture Advisor to provide periodic safety culture news, reinforcement articles in the 10 O'Clock News and on the DOE-ID home page

- Administer a brief essay-type electronic survey in October 2016 (or when appropriate, based on the aforementioned manager/supervisor training) to evaluate the quality of DOE-ID management engagement, after expectations for management engagement have been defined; moreover, the survey should also evaluate improvements in the areas highlighted by the most recent SCSA report

## **Conclusion**

DOE-ID management understands the development of an effective, open, and healthy safety culture is modeled from the top down, and is essential to long-term mission success. The DOE-ID management team has devoted resources and expertise to evaluate the health of its safety culture, and to develop and implement employee-developed initiatives to ensure sustained improvement in the DOE-ID federal safety culture. Continued, ongoing monitoring of these and future actions is recognized as critical to ensure sustained safety culture improvement.